

## **INDIA CUSTOMS**

### **Greetings:**

The *Namaste* is India's traditional greeting. One presses the palms together (fingers up) below the chin and says *Namaste* (in the south, *Namaskaram*). For superiors or to show respect, a slight bow is added.

Out of respect for women's privacy, men usually do not shake hands with or touch women in public.

Indians usually ask permission before taking leave of others.

### **Gestures:**

Excessive hand gestures or verbal articulation is considered impolite. People beckon with the palm turned down; they often point with the chin.

Particularly in the north, the right hand is used for passing objects, eating, and shaking hands, as the left is traditionally reserved for personal hygiene.

Grasping one's own ears expresses repentance or sincerity. One's feet or shoes should not touch another person, and if they do, an immediate apology is necessary. Whistling is very impolite. Women do not wink or whistle; such behavior is considered unladylike. Public displays of affection are inappropriate.

Footwear is removed before entering a temple, mosque, or Sikh shrine. When entering a Sikh shrine, all people cover their heads. Women also cover their heads in temples.

### **Holidays:**

India's national holidays include International New Year's Day (1 Jan.), Republic Day (26 Jan.), Independence Day (15 Aug.), and Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday (2 Oct.).

For *Holi*, which marks the end of the cold season, people toss colored water and powder on each other. *Baisakhi*, the New Year in northern India, also starts Punjab's harvest season.

The New Year is celebrated elsewhere by other names on different dates (as set by various calendars). Muslims celebrate *Id-ul-Fitr* at the end of *Ramzaan*, the month of fasting. Snakes are venerated during the summer festival of *Naag Panchami* because of their association with Hindu gods. The Hindu lord Krishna's birth is celebrated in August or September during *Jan mashtami*. Held under different names in various regions, *Dussehra* celebrates the triumph of good over evil. *Diwali* (Festival of Lights) celebrates the triumph of light over darkness. Thousands of lights decorate stores and homes during this time of goodwill. Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter.